

PAFFREL tells govt to overcome polls phobia

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People's Action for Free and Fair Elections (PAFFREL) yesterday called on the government and political party leaders to take action to hold elections to provincial councils without postponing them on some pretext or the other.

Executive Director of PAFFREL Rohana Hettiarachchi said in a statement: "The government has shown its reluctance to hold elections by continuously postponing them. Now, the government attempts to postpone elections to provincial councils, claiming that conducting polls on a staggered basis will be costly and, therefore, all of them should be held on a single date. For that purpose the government has to wait till end of 2019.

"Terms of the Sabaragamuwa, North Central and Eastern Provincial Councils are due to end in the first week of October. Accordingly, there were media reports that the Election Commission was ready to call for nominations for the elections of those three provinces on Oct 2.

However, Cabinet on July 25 gave approval for amending the laws to hold elections to all nine provincial councils on a single day.

"This is just another move to postpone elections in some provinces till the end of 2019.

"We too appreciate the government's decision to hold the elections on a single day. But under the present circumstances the government, which has been widely accepted as a one suffering from elections phobia, is trying to make use of the policy decision to postpone elections for some provinces.